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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/AGS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UNSC](#) [ETTC](#) [PARM](#) [PINR](#) [KNNP](#) [ENRG](#) [MNUC](#)
EU, IN, AU
SUBJECT: AUSTRIA ON THE UNSC: POTENTIAL RESISTANCE TO IRAN
SANCTIONS

Classified by: DCM Scott F. Kilner for reasons 1.4 (b) and
(d).

11. (C) Summary: If Austria is successful in its bid for a 2009-10 rotating UNSC seat, its positions on most urgent Security Council issues would reflect the EU consensus, MFA contacts convincingly tell us. On Iran, however, successive Austrian governments have shown a deep-seated philosophical bias against the assertive application of sanctions, in favor of engagement. Absent a clear EU consensus supporting tougher measures, the GOA could well prove to be an unhelpful voice on the Council. The GOA would also use its UNSC seat to promote broad discussion on the rule of international law, women's empowerment, and disarmament. MFA officials leading the campaign for a UNSC seat believe Austria's status as an EU member works to their advantage, but is not a guarantee of success. End Summary.
EU Consensus Would Guide GOA

12. (U) Ralph Scheide, Deputy Poldir and head of the MFA's Middle East Bureau, and Peter Huber, MFA Deputy Director for International Organizations, told visiting IO DAS Hook June 25 that Austria's plans for a possible UNSC term are focused on promoting thematic debates in three areas: the rule of international law, women's empowerment, and disarmament.

13. (C) On country specific issues -- such as North Korea, Iran, Zimbabwe, etc. -- Scheide and Huber said Austria would adopt a non-confrontational approach. While the GOA's position would be guided by the rule of law, the Austrians recognize the need for pragmatism, Scheide and Huber said.

14. (C) In a similar vein, MFA Poldir Thomas Mayr-Harting has noted often that Austria is the only EU member among the three European candidates for two non-permanent WEOG seats (Turkey and Iceland are the other two). Mayr-Harting has averred that this is significant because EU members holding rotating UNSC seats typically represent the EU consensus, rather than their national position. (Note: Mayr-Harting is slated to become Austria's UN PermRep beginning in late 2008. End Note).

15. (C) Other contacts also indicate that Austria's positions on the UNSC would hew closely to the EU consensus. Peter Jankowitsch, who served as UN PermRep when Austria first held a rotating UNSC seat in 1973-4 and is managing the GOA's current UNSC campaign, told us that Austria, as a small, non-permanent member, would not try to overplay its hand. It would be guided more by the EU consensus than by permanent UNSC members France and the UK, both of which are more willing to follow their own, national policies.

Iran Sanctions Could Be the Exception

¶6. (C) Jankowitsch believes the EU consensus will be consistent with the French/UK view -- and the U.S. view -- on most issues likely to come up during the 2009-10 UNSC term.

One important possible exception, however, is Iran sanctions.

Austria has consistently been among those EU members resisting a French led -- and UK backed -- effort to establish a set of tough measures for EU-wide implementation of UNSCR 1803. Jankowitsch, like most other Austrian officials, acknowledges candidly that the GOA is skeptical about the efficacy of sanctions generally, and would need to be persuaded that any proposed, stiffer sanctions against Iran would lead to the desired result. If the EU were clearly and unambiguously in favor of such measures, the GOA would likely feel compelled to support them, but the Austrians would not necessarily follow the lead of France and the UK, he said. Ingfrid Schutz-Muller, international relations professor and special MFA envoy to the Pacific island nations (where the GOA is courting support for its UNSC campaign), agreed that Austria would try to be a "bridge builder" in any debate over Iran sanctions.

¶7. (C) At the same time, Jankowitsch maintained, the GOA would have no trouble supporting sanctions on Burma or North Korea. Though the GOA has resisted EU sanctions on Burma in the past, the MFA is now "fed up" with the Burmese regime after its mishandling of the cyclone and the elections, he said. The GOA also views the North Korean regime as unlikely to respond to softer diplomatic measures, he said.

MFA Africa Department Created

¶8. (U) Thomas Muhlmann, head of the MFA unit running the UNSC campaign, informed us that the MFA's recent decision to upgrade its Africa Sub-Department to a full Department is partly related to the UNSC bid. While the "long overdue" move had been in the works for some time, it was expedited in light of the fact that Africa accounts for some 60 percent of UNSC business, he said.

EU Membership Aids Candidacy

¶9. (C) Jankowitsch believes Austria is likely to succeed in its quest for a UNSC seat. As the only EU-member candidate, he expects Austria to receive broad EU support. He said Iceland will draw support from the Nordic countries, but since each country gets two votes, the Nordics can also vote for Austria. Muhlmann, on the other hand, was more cautious.

He said "it would be nice to think" that all fellow EU members would vote for Austria, but indicated that at least a few would not. He declined to elaborate on the feedback he has been getting on Austria's candidacy, other than to say that EU membership will help Austria, but will not guarantee success.

Girard-diCarlo